The intervention was carried out with four groups (two experimental and two controlled). The total number of students in each group is 31 female students. Each group is a mixed-proficiency language class (MPLC), which refers to a class of students with different language proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced) receiving the same instruction. In the English Language Centre (ELC), an English placement test was mandatory to place each student into the appropriate English language class. However, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the English placement test was cancelled, and all the students were placed in mixed-proficiency language classes.

All four groups included within the intervention are enrolled in the foundation/preparatory year at university. A preparatory or foundation year is a one-year introduction to a full degree curriculum and designed to prepare students to their entry into university. The instructional intervention of this study consisted of 13 weeks of English language course during the first semester of the prep-year programme, 2 hours per week. Data collection and intervention were carried out between September and December 2021. Measurements and data collection for all groups were performed pre- and post-test, where the pre-test was conducted during weeks 2 and 3, and the post-test during weeks 12 and 13.

The teaching intervention was designed before the semester commenced to be delivered in a face-to-face teaching. The lesson plans were prepared to be addressed to B1-level group (corresponds to English Independent users) on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale. CEFR is a guideline used for grading an individual’s language proficiency across Europe and consists of six reference language levels (A1/Beginner, A2/Elementary, B1/Intermediate, B2/Upper-Intermediate, C1/Advanced, C2/Proficiency). However, due to the cancellation of the placement test, all the prep-year English groups started the English course with level A2/Elementary level regardless of their language proficiency level. This, in turn, led to making some changes and modifications to the original lesson plans to include lessons from A2-level coursebook besides B1-level coursebook to be covered throughout the first semester. Moreover, to maintain physical distancing inside the classroom, refers to maintaining physical space when in public areas (at least 6 feet from one another) in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia issued that all educational institutions in the kingdom must implement hybrid learning models (distance learning). Hybrid learning is an educational model where some students attend the class physically, while others attend virtually from home. The teaching in hybrid classes is synchronous, where the teacher instructs the in-class and the remote students simultaneously and at the same time. During the intervention, in Week 3, the university decided to split groups of whole classes into two; one group attends in-person for a whole week (group A) while the other group attends virtually from home (group B), then they switch places the following week. This arrangement was implemented to ensure COVID-19 SOPs were followed keeping physical distancing inside classrooms. Both teacher and students were instructed to wear a face mask during the whole face-to-face interaction. Group B attended each lesson remotely via Cisco Webex Meetings.

Two coursebooks were used to teach this English Language course. The first coursebook is Milestones in English (level-A2/Elementary) and the second one is Milestones in English (level-B1/Intermediate). Both are designed for adults studying a foundation or preparatory year at university. Each coursebook helps students develop the language skills needed to function in an English-speaking academic context. Moreover, Milestones in English incorporates an integrated approach to language learning, where students can use a combination of language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) within a single activity to emulate a situation that they may come across in the real world. Milestones in English provides support for teachers, who are teaching hybrid classes, by providing iTools, a digital classroom presentation tool designed for use on whiteboard (in class) or laptop computers (online). iTools contains an e-book format of the coursebook as pages form the Student’s book can be displayed on screen with integrated audio and video with optional script for students to read along whilst they listen or watch.

In terms of listening, Milestones in English adopts an interactive, interpretive approach to listening, where listeners use both bottom-up and top-down processing in understanding messages. However, within academic contexts, the information is often transmitted one-way/unidirectional through lectures or talks. This is identified as the transactional use of language, which is more message-oriented and has the purpose of conveying messages as opposed to interactional use of language, where the listener is expected to respond to the speaker. Transactional listening requires comprehending the messages precisely, and sometimes listening to get the correct answer. The main goal of Milestones in English is to develop the listening skill of learners through activating both bottom-up and top-down processing rather than testing their listening comprehension with little attention paid to development. Therefore, the coursebook provides a variety of listening activities, e.g., phonological features like connected speech, and discourse features like time sequencers. The coursebook addresses learners’ needs in listening in three different ways; (a) the exposure to the appropriate input to present phonetic features. Learners are exposed to short clips in A2 coursebook to distinguish connected speech, reduced forms, function words and weak sounds like the schwa /ə/. Such input is accompanied by small-scale exercises that focus on examples of just one of the phonetic features at a time. The second way of addressing listeners’ needs is through (b) training students the five skill demands of psycholinguistic models of listening, which are: decoding (matching signals to the sound system of the language), lexical search (matching group of sounds to the vocabulary knowledge), parsing (converting utterances into mental representations based on syntactic structures), meaning construction (interpretation of the spoken text in terms of context and the purpose of the speaker), discourse construction (building on previous information) (Field, 2008). The third way of tackling learner’s needs is through (c) compensating the comprehension gaps that lower-level L2 listeners often face when encountering difficult speech. One way to overcome this difficulty is through equipping lower-level L2 learners with the appropriate listening strategies, which enable them to build more complex meanings despite the limited linguistic and lexical knowledge they possess.

This unprecedented transition to online teaching and learning has resulted in challenges faced by students and teachers. Some of these challenges are related to the IT and wireless networking infrastructures, such as low-speed connectivity and difficulties accessing the educational platforms online. Another challenge faced by the teacher was switching between two modes while teaching: face-to-face in a traditional classroom and online learning from a remote location. The switch inside the classroom was very challenging because it forced the teacher to give the same attention to the students in-class and to those who attended online simultaneously. This caused some distraction to the teacher, who tries to engage the students in-class with the listening activities while also asking the ones online to participate and share their answers either by typing in the chatting box on Cisco Webex Meetings or use the microphone. The additional time spent to prepare all instructional materials in a digital format was also challenging. Converting the metacognitive listening instruction from face-to-face to remote teaching and learning was even more challenging especially during collaborative work. Although collaboration took place in breakout rooms online, it was problematic for the teacher to monitor and observe students’ performance in those activities, which led some students to spend too much time off-task. Moreover, keeping the online students motivated and engaged was the biggest challenge for the teacher compared to face-to-face teaching. Due to Saudi Arabian cultural traditions and norms, cameras are always turned off during virtual conferencing, which may cause students to feel less socially connected to each other. Additionally, many students were reluctant to speak on the microphone and preferred to type in the chatting box. By giving students a choice for some activities, teachers can improve the students’ motivation by engaging them with the selection of teaching materials. For example, during the semi-structured interviews, one of the participants said that she preferred to listen to songs and read lyrics at the same time more than listening to recordings from the coursebook. Another participant suggested listening to and watching short clips from movies or TV series to keep her more motivated to learn.

Another challenge faced by online students is the distracting environment around them or the use of mobile devices to attend the hybrid lesson, which can be interrupted by apps notifications. To minimise the negative impact of online learning, the listening task was broken up into smaller pieces/stages to get students’ attention. Also, students who attended hybrid classes using mobile phones were advised to turn off the apps’ notifications to avoid distractions during the lesson.

As a teacher of this course, this sudden transition to hybrid learning in the beginning of the semester (week 3), was unexpected to me. I suffered from lack of skills and was less confident in digital literacy. For example, I never taught a class using microphone and wearing a face mask while teaching face-to-face at the same time. I had trouble with delivering the course content in a clear and comprehensible way especially to online learners. One way to overcome this obstacle was to assess my teaching performance in advance. I recorded my teaching on microphone while wearing the face mask (since it was obligatory not to take if off even inside the classroom) and tried to evaluate my speech clarity and volume as well as the pronunciation of words. This process helped me to tackle the speech unintelligibility and to adjust my breaths to be deeper to help support my voice and deliver clearer messages.

**Teacher Diary**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Lesson Plan** | **Comments** |
| **Week#1**  **(29/08 – 02/09)** | **New Student Orientation Week (O-Week)** |  |
| **Week#2**  **(05/08 – 09/09)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – A2**  **Units: 1 – 2 – 3** | **Whole Group Strategy Lesson:**  **- Introduction (Awareness Raising)**  **- Introduce L2 listening strategies and share the ‘list of listening strategies’**  **- Explaining ‘Metacognition’ and ‘Self-Efficacy’**  **- Modelling as a teaching strategy**  **- Understanding a personal introduction**  **- Recognizing positive and negative contractions**  **- Listening for specific information**  **- Listening for sentence stress**  **- Track Listening Strategic Plan** | On my first lesson with the four groups, I introduced myself as the Listening teacher and explained to them that I will be covering with them only 2 hours per week to teach the English listening component of the coursebook. I have set the classroom regulations on this meeting. I also explained the intervention aims and aspects to the Experimental cohort, and that I am interested in their listening development and strategy use throughout the intervention. However, I mentioned nothing about the strategy instruction and strategy use to the Control cohort even though they were also notified that they will be part of an experiment and that I will collect their answers via online questionnaires.  The lesson started by a brief introduction to the A2-coursebook (Milestones in English). I explained to them the types of listening activities and tasks to expect in this coursebook. We also discussed the listening assessment process for this course. And I told them that they will be given a Listening Comprehension Test twice, as part of the intervention, which will not be formally assessed or included in their course grade.  I started the listening lesson with the Experiment groups by a small activity to raise their awareness regarding strategy use. I played a video on YouTube of a Saudi female, who spoke with a different regional accent in L1 (Arabic). Then, I asked the students to give me the general meaning of her speech. Although the students laughed at some words and struggled to find the exact meaning, they were able to figure out the general idea by understanding the aim of her speech, which was a complaint about traffic congestions in her city. I gave feedback about this task, which was related to top-down processing that linking the received information to background knowledge to build meaning is enough to comprehend the spoken text. I also explained that this strategy is referred to as ‘inferencing’, to use information from the text to guess meaning of unfamiliar linguistic items. Moreover, I drew the students’ attention to the fact that they do not have to translate each single word from the spoken text in order to build meaning, and that not knowing the meaning of some words is absolutely fine as long as they can get the overall gist of the passage.  Next, I introduced students to the listening strategies and explained to them that such strategies can also be applied in their L1 to improve their listening skill, especially with difficult listening passages. Then, I shared the ‘List of Listening Strategies’ and went over them one by one to explain each strategy to them. I asked the students to keep this list and use it as a reference with each listening activity in the future. I noticed that the students had no idea about these listening strategies, and that all the strategies were new to them although they may apply them automatically while they listen.  After introducing the listening strategies’ list, I went on to explain important concepts from this intervention. I started off by explaining the meaning of ‘metacognition’ and how it is related to L2 listening. Also, I explained the term ‘self-efficacy’ and how it is related to L2 listening development. I also clarified the relationship between listening strategies and self-efficacy (Why are we learning about listening strategies?). Being explicit about the purpose of teaching these strategies can help boost students’ self-efficacy and consequently their motivation. Likewise, strategy instruction and use can help enhance students’ self-regulation about L2 listening development.  In order to prepare students for the listening activities, I began by modelling the strategy use by demonstrating to them how to implement listening strategies by answering comprehension questions of a listening passage while verbalizing the listening comprehension process. This stage is very crucial to help students learn by observing (observational learning) the process of orchestrating bottom-up and top-down processing in listening as well as the integration of cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies.  The modelling of first listening activity was from Unit 1/lesson 1. I explained that the listening task was Understanding a Personal Introduction. The listening passage was about Ozan, who talks about his life in London. He mentioned personal information, such as his nationality, marital status, his neighbours, and interests. I told the students that they are required to listen and fill in the missing information about Ozan. I started the task by demonstrating the importance of pre-listening strategies: (a) prediction, which is carried out before listening and allows the learners to predict what they are going to hear. Then, when they do the actual listening, they can either confirm or reject their predictions. Another pre-listening strategy is (b) advance organization, which is related to clarifying the objectives of the listening task and proposing the appropriate strategies to carry out the task. After the pre-listening stage, I demonstrated how to apply directed and selective attention, and the difference between each. Finally, after completing the task, I emphasized the role of self-evaluation to assess the listening difficulties and how to overcome them in the future.  To help scaffold students’ use of listening strategies, I distributed the ‘Guide for Listening’ (adapted from Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). This guide helps students list their listening predictions. After writing down their predictions, students can discuss their predictions with a partner before they start the first listening. After that, they listen again to verify their comprehension and tackle any discrepancies between their comprehension and their partners. Finally, they listen for the third time after group discussion and read the script while listening. The guide also allows students to write down their reflection (evaluation) of their listening performance and to set goals for the next listening task.  It was noticed that the Guide for Listening was a bit difficult for students to complete. Most, if not all, of them never tried to make prediction about the listening beforehand. They were taught how to activate their prior knowledge (schemata) by raising few questions about the topic or explaining new key words by the teacher. This method was also adopted in many English classes in High schools. However, planning and evaluation seemed to be new listening strategies for the students that they needed further training to master them.  Another observation was related to mental translation, most students felt lost during the middle of the listening if they failed to comprehend the meaning of new words. I noticed that some of them tried to translate words while listening in order to get the correct answer. Otherwise, they felt like they did not understand anything from the listening passage.  Next, I asked students to participate in a ‘Track your Listening Strategic Plan’ activity. In this activity, I shared a Google spreadsheet with the students, which contains their names and strategies names. Then, I instructed them to complete a listening activity in pairs then tick the strategies they’ve deployed and add any additional comments they would like to share. This activity was very interesting for the students and important because it showed them how to orchestrate different types of strategies to build understanding. It was also important for me as a teacher because it allowed me to understand the listening developmental process of my students. Later, I shared the spreadsheet with the whole group to discuss their strategy use. It was noticed that no student deployed planning and evaluation to their listening (both are metacognitive strategies). Also, it was noticed that the majority relied on inferencing and selective/directed attention while listening. See an example of Google spreadsheet from one Experiment group (SC 606):  **Link:** [Listening Strategies Spreadsheet](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1iD6E8ilhO5sPBC34BizGq345sirIrQxY-Z6N8pHGe8I/edit" \l "gid=0)  Overall, the students were eager to learn more about strategies, and the use of YouTube video to raise their strategy awareness was really motivating to many of them especially less-skilled listeners because they were able to realize that their listening comprehension difficulties were not only attributed to learning L2 but can also be found in their L1. |
| **Week#3**  **(12/09 – 16/09)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – A2**  **Units: 4 – 5** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **- Set listening goals**  **- Predict before listen**  **- Engage in pair-work discussion to understand the meaning of the passage**  **- Understanding a lecture about an unusual town**  **- Hearing different vowel sounds**  **- Reflect & set goals for the next listening** | The class was started by asking students about the importance of listening strategies and how they would improve the listening process. I also asked them to explain to me the new concepts discussed in the previous lecture ‘metacognition’ and ‘self-efficacy’. A basic review of the listening strategies was conducted at the beginning of the lesson to keep the know-how of strategies fresh in the minds of students. At this level, students are advised to implement one or more listening strategies at the same time during the next listening activity. I explained a new term to the students, which is ‘self-regulation’ and how it is related to strategy use and metacognition. I also asked students to use the List of Listening Strategies and distribute new Guide for Listening worksheets. At the end of the listening tasks, I collected the students’ Guide for Listening worksheets (was done in pair work) to assess their strategy use. I found that the majority have deployed ‘directed and selective attention’, ‘inferencing’, ‘translation’, ‘focusing on key words’ and ‘linking’ strategies. Few students deployed ‘monitoring’, ‘prediction’, ‘elaboration or using prior knowledge about the topic’ and ‘evaluation’ strategies. In one of the worksheets, the pair wrote a note that they did not fully comprehend the whole listening passage; however, they got all the answers right! Another pair mentioned that they faced difficulties at the ‘prediction’ stage because the lacked prior knowledge about the topic ‘Astronauts’, which required them too much thinking and guessing. However, they said that the listening was easy and clear, and they were able to answer the activity questions correctly.  After carrying out this activity, I noticed that students rarely planned ahead before they listened ‘planning strategy’ because they did not know about the strategies and how effective they could be to improve their listening skill. However, they started to deploy ‘prediction’ after being introduced to it last week. Another observation is that many students mistake problematic words with key words. When they struggle with the meaning of a word, they think that it is an important word (key word), even if it is not, which hinders their comprehension of the listening text in an attempt to perform ‘mental translation’. It was also noticed that students rarely evaluated their performance after the listening task. I asked them if this is the case with other skills (reading, writing and speaking), they answered ‘yes’, they do not self-evaluate their performance when learning L2 because they did not know how to self-assess their own performance. The lack of self-evaluation has led to the lack of self-reflection and the difficulty to set goals for the listening in the future.  My next objective was to help students set listening goals for themselves. To achieve this, I shared Listening Goal-Setting from Guide for Listening worksheets and asked them to describe actionable steps to get to their listening goals. |
| **Week#4**  **(19/09 – 23/09)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – A2**  **Units: 6 – 7** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **- Present simple and past simple verbs – hearing the difference**  **- Re-tell information you hear**  **- Reflect & set goals for the next listening** | The lesson started with a warm-up activity aimed at facilitating whole group discussion of strategy use. I raised few discussion questions, such ‘Which strategies have you been deploying the most? And why?’ and ‘Would you reflect on your answers on the Guide for Listening in terms of evaluation and goal setting?’ and as ‘Can you think about the difficulties you have encountered with deploying listening strategies?’  After the students shared their answers, I picked one of the listening difficulties, which was speaker’s accent. I asked the students to work in pairs and share their problem-solving process to overcome this difficulty. One of the students said that she would ask the person to repeat what s/he said again. Another student suggested getting exposed to a range of varieties of English accents.  Students were encouraged to share their answers with the rest of the class while the teacher was monitoring and giving feedback when needed.  Next, I asked the students to open their coursebooks to unit 6 and do the listening activity. It was micro skill about hearing the difference between past and present verbs by paying attention to the ending of the past verbs. The students were taught how to listen to specific sounds like: /t/, /d/, and /ɪd/ at the end of past regular verbs.  Another listening activity was about re-telling information. The students were asked to listen to a spoken text and then answer questions related to the text. I explained to them that when retelling information, they do not have to repeat everything they heard; rather, they can give key information only and start by mentioning the general idea, then add two to four important points.  Re-telling information is a very important skill that academic students need to master. It will help them listen and paraphrase or summarize what they heard especially when listening to long academic lectures or talks. However, the accompanied activities for teaching this skill were highly scaffolded in the coursebook. This is because the coursebook is addressed to A2 learners (Elementary level) and at this stage, the tasks have to be to scaffold the learning process. For example, one of the activities was a True or False, another one was to listen and write down the missing words. In my opinion, these activities are good, but they do not reflect the natural listening the students will encounter in their academic studies in the future. I would modify the listening activities to include listening to a whole passage while taking notes, then review the notes and re-tell the information. |
| **Week#5**  **(26/09 – 30/09)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – A2**  **Units: 8 – 9** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **- Hearing the difference between present and past simple questions**  **- Listening to numbers**  **- Reflect & set goals for the next listening** | I started the lesson by introducing students to a small awareness-raising activity, where I shared with them some skilled L2 listeners’ statements about their listening strategy use (statements were derived from the piloting phase). For example, ‘I use skimming and scanning before I listen’. I further explained that what the participant meant in that statement is that she applied advance organization before the listening process; she read the questions first and highlighted the important key words, then directed her listening accordingly (directed/selective attention). I asked them later to share their opinions regarding each statemen; whether they agree or disagree with it and why. The students showed high levels of engagement with the task and some of them felt that they share the same issues in L2 listening comprehension.  A micro skill was introduced later aimed at teaching students how to tell the difference between past and present simple questions. This activity was from the coursebook, and it drew students’ attention to the weak sound of auxiliary verbs used to form present and past simple questions; ‘Do you’ may sound like /dəjə/ and ‘Did you’ may sound like /dɪdʒjə /. Students were instructed to look at specific time expressions to tell the tense of the simple questions. For example, ‘every day’ is often used with present simple questions while ‘yesterday’ is often used with past simple questions.  Another micro skill covered in this lecture is listening to numbers. I spent more time working on explaining this skill because the data gathered from the piloting stage and from the listening comprehension test (during pre-test) indicate that listening to numbers can cause confusion to many learners. The aim of the listening in this lesson is to teach students how to distinguish between different types of number, such as fractions, percentages, decimals, temperature, heights, lengths, and very large numbers. Teaching students how to correctly read these numbers will make it easier for them to process those numbers mentally when they hear them. Because listening to numbers was challenging for many students, I decided to spend more time on little extra practice listening to numbers. For example, to teach students how native speakers say numbers in the hundreds, I had to present to students all different variations of saying numbers in hundreds to help them with the listening. The number 107 can be pronounced as: (1) one hundred seven, (2) one hundred and seven, (3) a hundred seven, and (4) a hundred and seven.  My opinion regarding the listening to numbers’ exercises in the coursebook is that they do help students know more about different types of numbers, and they give more practice to listen to short passages and write down the correct numbers. However, the recorded short passages were modified to be in a slower speech rate which can be unprofitable. Students need to be exposed to listen to numbers at full conversational speed. In real life, the speakers, especially native speakers, will not adjust their speech rate in normal, daily conversations. Therefore, the teaching materials should introduce students to more authentic listening passages and recordings.  One suggested solution to overcome this problem, is to use external resources for teaching listening to numbers. There are many websites, videos and podcasts that can provide authentic materials to be used as teaching resources.  For example, I found this blog on Listening Tips for Numbers, where the author or blogger (a native speaker of English), created listening exercises by recording her own voice speaking at normal conversational speech.  <https://nextstepenglish.com/english-numbers-listening-quiz-1/>  I thought about implementing such external resources in my next lesson plan whenever I felt the need to modify the listening activities to enhance the development of the listening skill of my students. |
| **Week#6**  **(03/10 – 07/10)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – A2**  **Units: 10 – 12** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **- Using key words to build understanding**  **- Understanding the gist**  **- Hearing the difference between past simple and present perfect verb phrases**  **- Reflect & set goals for the next listening** | The lecture began with brining attention to raising awareness of the role of ‘inferencing’ in listening comprehension. Inferencing is a listening strategy through which students can guess the meaning of the passage by analysing textual and contextual information or through activating prior knowledge to compensate for missing information. However, I had to explain to students that inferencing relies upon several factors to be effective. For example, if the student is unfamiliar with a specific accent, s/he may make wrong inferences, which can have a negative impact on understanding for L2 listeners.  I later shared my own experience as an L2 listener by recalling how I made wrong inferences due to unfamiliar accent when I misheard the phrase ‘Sunday dinner’ for ‘Sunny Dillon’. The accent of this phrase was a Southern Atlanta/Georgia accent. In the syllable codas of that African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) regional dialect, the deletion of word-internal alveolar stops /d/ and /t/ results from cluster simplification to achieve gestural economy (this is why ‘Sunday’ sounds like ‘sunny’). Another feature is the deletion of /r/ after vowels. In AAVE, /r/ is sometimes deleted at the end of a word if preceded by a vowel (this explains why ‘dinner’ sounds like ‘dillon’ and ‘beer’ sounds like ‘biyuh’). I played the video on YouTube to let them hear the misheard phrase ‘Sunday dinner’ pronounced by an African-American native speaker of English. The students felt really engaged with my story and asked me questions about how I came to develop my listening comprehension.  Next, I started covering the coursebook materials and introduced a new listening skill related to understanding key words to build meaning. Although many students already deploy this strategy (from their own answers collected from the Guide for Listening worksheets before); however, the coursebook provides different listening activities to help students practice this strategy differently (pages, 132-133). I also explained to them that stressed words in spoken utterances are usually the key words in those utterances. Moreover, I told them that we can compensate our lack of knowledge of certain vocabulary items by linking what we heard with what we already know (our prior knowledge) about the topic, or the language used to build understanding.  Moving on to the next lesson, the aim of this listening activity is to show students how to understand the gist while listening in L2. First, I explained to the students the meaning of ‘gist’ and gave some examples. Gist is the general meaning of the text, e.g., how many people are speaking? Who is speaking? What is the purpose of the conversation? Hence, I gave them tips on how to understand the gist of a recording. They need to focus on different voices and focus on key words (stressed words). However, in real life, they can also focus on the context of the conversation, such as the place and environment. I had also to emphasize that understating the gist is the backbone for understanding other detailed information.  The last listening lesson in Unit 12 was a micro skill about hearing the difference between past simple and present perfect verb phrases. I explained to students how to pay attention to the pronunciation of the simple past (regular/irregular verbs) and the present perfect tense. Because the present perfect tense has this weak sound of the present perfect auxiliary (have/has). This auxiliary verb is often contracted in fast speech. For example, ‘We have met her’ becomes ‘We’ve met her’, which can be similar to the simple past form: ‘We met her’. The coursebook suggested listening to time expressions, which indicate the time. However, for my learners, I believe a grammatical explanation is fundamental to teach them ‘when’ to use each tense. Once they learn about the appropriacy of using either simple past or present perfect in different context, they will be able to spot the difference when they listen. Additionally, I would modify the listening exercises on the coursebook (pages 160-161) to include more authentic listening materials containing both forms of verbs (it is preferable to play a conversation between natives, where the speakers switch verb tenses from simple past to present perfect, so that the students can hear the transition from one tense to another). |
| **Week#7**  **(10/10 – 14/10)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – B1**  **Units: 1 – 2** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **- Listen for stress to identify key words**  **- Understanding a radio programme about working in the street**  **- Reflect & set goals for the next listening** | I started the lesson with a comprehensive group activity to aid open discussion around different learning and revision listening strategies. Through brainstorming different listening strategies and techniques to listen, students will be able to understand a variety of different listening strategies and which strategies are best for them to deploy while listening and be confident in using them. Students are encouraged to share the difficulties they faced while deploying these strategies and discuss this with their peers and try to find out ways to overcome these difficulties. My role was to lead and monitor this discussion and give students more insights into how to effectively use listening strategies as well as how to activate metacognitive awareness.  Next, moving to the coursebook, the listening activity was delivered to teach students listen for stressed words to identify key words. I reminded students of this strategy (because it was applied before in the previous coursebook – Milestones in English/A2). Then, we completed the listening activities following the 3-stages listening process. Moving to the next section (Unit 2), I asked students to work in pairs and try to make predictions about the listening task (or making inferences from the visuals and titles presented in the coursebook), then share their thoughts before we listen. The topic was: ‘Understanding a radio programme about working in the street’, and students had to listen to three different people talking about their jobs in the street and elicit specific information.  Finally, students will evaluate their performance, strategy use, and judge their overall execution of the listening task. They will set goals for the next listening based on their self-evaluation. My role was to observe and evaluate the students’ performance during the listening stages. Feedback (verbal persuasion) was provided especially to less skilled listeners, and more detailed feedback was given when I was asked by students. |
| **Week#8**  **(17/10 – 21/10)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – B1**  **Units: 3 – 4** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **- Recognize *-t* and *-d* + consonants**  **- Understanding a podcast about living without the internet**  **- Recognizing Extra Sounds in Connected Speech**  **- Reflect & set goals for the next listening** | The lesson started with a comprehensive group activity to aid open discussion around different learning and revision listening strategies. First, I played a recording from the new lesson and asked students to try and answer the comprehension questions. Then, I asked them to think about their thinking by asking ‘Describe how you arrived at your answer’ ‘Think-aloud’. Then, I surveyed the class by asking ‘How many people agree with deploying listening strategies? Which strategies are more effective than others?’  Through leading and monitoring this discussion and by giving students more insights into how to effectively use listening strategies as well as how to activate metacognitive awareness, I was able to elicit some interesting answers regarding students’ perceptions about listening strategies and their awareness of the role of strategies to develop their listening skill.  Later, I explained the micro skill from the coursebook ‘Recognize *-t* and *-d* + consonants’ and gave them examples.  The next listening activity was ‘Understanding a podcast about living without the internet’, where students had to practice few metacognitive strategies (predictions, monitoring, selective/directed attention). I had to explain the meaning of some new words after they heard the podcast, e.g., journalist, podcast. It was noticed that with long recordings (this one, for example, was a two-minutes podcast), students preferred to read the transcripts while listening more than with short recordings because they thought that they did not have to.  The next micro skill was ‘Recognizing Extra Sounds in Connected Speech’, and in order to teach this lesson, I had to give examples from L1 (Arabic) to explain the meaning of ‘connected speech’. I explained to students that in English, unlike Arabic, words can link together in a continuous stream of sounds, without clear-cut borderlines. This stringing of words together results in connected speech. It also explains why written English is sometimes different from spoken English, which may sometimes cause many listening problems for students. I also introduced students to different types of connected speech (e.g., assimilation, intrusion, catenation, and elision). Moving to the lesson on page 52, I explained to students that when two vowel sounds meet, an extra sound is inserted which resembles either /w/ or /j/, to mark the transition sound between the two vowels. This process is called ‘intrusion’. Next, I modelled and drilled the phrase as it is said naturally. For example, ‘go on’ sounds like ‘gowon’ and ‘I agree’ sounds like ‘aiyagree’. Students practiced saying these phonetic variants. When some of them struggled with long phrases, I used back-chaining; which starts with the last sound or phrase and working towards the whole sound slowly. For example, for the phrase ‘want to add to your life’, you drill ‘toyourlife’ then ‘towadd-toyourlife’ ‘wantowadd-toyourlife’. More phrases were covered and drilled from Student’s book (p. 52). |
| **Week#9**  **(24/10 – 28/10)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – B1**  **Units: 5 – 6** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **- Understanding words around key words**  **- Taking notes while listening**  **- Recognizing linkers in fast speech**  **- Reflect & set goals for the next listening** | At the beginning of this class, I utilized ‘think-pair-share’ to elicit answers on strategy use and goal-setting for listening development. I gave students two mins of think time and two mins discussion with a partner and then open up the class to discussion. I also asked ‘follow-ups’ questions related to listening strategies and goal-setting (e.g., ‘Why? Do you agree? Can you elaborate? Tell me more. Can you give an example?’). This introduction to the topic aimed at stimulating interest and encourage thinking.  Next lesson was ‘Understanding words around key words’. Since vocabulary knowledge and the familiarity of the topic are essential components of inferencing strategy (Pulido, 2007), I started the activity by introducing the new vocabulary followed by asking questions related to the new listening topic (lecture about possessions and how we develop ideas about them). Students were instructed to work on the listening activity on page (64), which guides them to listen carefully for key words in longer chunks.  The second part of the lesson was a listening activity, where students listen to a three-minutes lecture and fill in the missing words to practice taking notes while listening (p. 64). Although the activity was designed to scaffold students while taking notes during the listening process, this does not resemble real-life note taking. In academic life, students are expected to listen and take notes from scratch, rather than filling a form. Therefore, it is more advisable to teach students how to take notes and summarize main ideas while listening. I would modify this activity to include listening again to the whole recording while taking notes and share your answers in groups to verify your comprehension.  The next lesson is a micro skill about ‘Recognizing linkers in fast speech’. I had to explain to students what we mean by linkers. I mentioned that when we speak quickly, we sometimes don’t pronounce parts of words. This is especially true with very common words, like linkers, and, but, because, so and for example (e.g., ‘but’ sounds like ‘bt’, ‘because’ sounds like ‘cos’, ‘for example’ sounds like ‘frexample’, ‘and’ sounds like ‘n’, ‘so’ sounds like ‘s’). I asked the students to complete the exercise on page 78. |
| **Week#10**  **(31/10 – 04/11)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – B1**  **Units: 7 – 8** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **-**  **Understanding weak forms**  **-**  **Understanding a speaker from intonation and pauses**  **- Recognizing connected speech**  **- Reflect & set goals for the next listening** | This week, I thought about trying something different. I thought about implementing observational learning in my lesson, which is one of the five pillars of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). To maintain the reciprocal interaction between the person, environment and behaviour, observational learning can serve as the stimuli from which learners can witness and observe certain behaviours and then reproduce those behaviours. This can be achieved through ‘modelling’ these behaviours. SCT suggests that observational learning can improve skill performance by enhancing learners’ self-efficacy. Vicarious experience (e.g., watching someone else performing the task) is one of the main four sources of self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) stated that observing similar others (e.g., similar L2 learners are people who share the same L1 and have the same level of proficiency) will increase learner’s self-efficacy to perform the same task. Moreover, observing effective strategies can help overcome previous failures and maintain self-efficacy (Law & Hall, 2007). For this matter, I asked my cousin Layan, who is 18 years old, to model a listening task while verbalizing the listening process. I took a video recording of her while she was performing the task and presented this recording to the students in class. Before Layan performed the listening task, I gave her explicit strategy instruction, and explained to her the list of listening strategies that she can deploy. While she was listening, I asked her to explain how she came to answer each listening comprehension question. I also asked her to explain how she was able to overcome listening difficulties and which strategy did she deploy. I gave Layan a high-level listening task, to show students how an L2 learner of the same age, and same proficiency-level as theirs can execute the task successfully. Also, I gave Layan verbal feedback after each listening comprehension to help her maintain high self-efficacy levels. The students in my class were very interested in Layan’s performance and they praised her use of listening strategies, and some described her as ‘very smart’. I also noticed that the students were highly motivated and engaged watching Layan perform and even wanted more recordings of her performing different types of tasks. I also thought about making this activity more communicative and build a realistic communicative situation, even for virtual learners, by asking Layan to attend the class in person (or online) as a guest speaker for students to interview her. They can prepare interview questions for her in pairs or in groups and then ask her those questions in class. These questions can be about the strategy use, listening difficulties that she may have encountered, or how did she improve her listening skill? etc.  Next strategy instruction activity reflects on students goal setting from weeks (2 & 3). I asked students to completely select their own listening goals and ensure that the goals are specific, measurable, and connected to learning listening. This will help students feel a sense of agency and choice over their learning process.  Moving on with the next lesson, I taught students how to understand weak forms. I explained that speakers often don’t pronounce small words very clearly when they speak quickly. I gave them few examples to Ss and asked them to guess and identify weak forms: (‘**I’m** in the conference’, ‘Now, **they’ve** become …’). I also explained that weak forms are used with words like *am*, *is* and *are*.  Next lesson is a micro skill teaching students how to understand speakers from intonation and pauses. I made it clear to students that listening for intonation and pauses can help them understand the speakers and comprehend the speakers’ messages. I read two sentences out loud and asked students to guess which sentence indicates that the speaker has more to say, and which one indicates that the speaker has finished talking. I also explained the correct positions of pauses (at the end of sentences and when the speaker changes topic).  The last listening activity in this unit (Unit 8) is recognizing connected speech. Before I explained this activity, I reminded students of the concept of ‘connected speech’ discussed before in Unit 4/B1 coursebook. I asked them to recall what they know about connected speech and its different types in spoken passages. Then I read out loud few phrases and asked students to identify connected speech in them (e.g., ‘went out’ sounds like ‘wentout’, ‘hard exam’ sounds like ‘hardexam’, ‘let’s leave’ sounds like ‘letsleave’). I also explained that when a word ends in a consonant and the next word starts with a vowel sound, we usually link the words together when we say them, so they sound like one word (assimilation). |
| **Week#11**  **(07/11 – 11/11)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – B1**  **Units: 9 – 10** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **- Using meaning and grammar to understand a speaker**  **- Recognizing sequencers**  **- Understanding the main point**  **- Recognizing numbers and statistics**    **- Reflect & set goals for the next listening**  **- Track listening strategic plan** | The lesson started by reviewing some strategies for listening teaching students some strategies for listening during exams. I explained to them that although there will be similar strategies for listening during exam as listening in classroom or real life; however, there are also a number of different strategies that are crucial to boost your listening during exam time. The first strategy is to get familiar with the test and the question types and format. Unlike the listening exercise we have been doing in classroom, listening questions in exams can be quite different. In this course, all listening questions are MCQs (multiple-choice questions), and unlike the lesson in class, where the recording is played thrice or more, during the exam, recordings will be played only twice.  I told students that some strategies are more important to answer exam questions than others. For example, advance organization (carefully reading the instructions and exam questions) is very important. Underlining key words in the listening questions to help them predict the content is also key to get the right answer (prediction and planning). For more advanced students, I told them to think about other words for key words as they may not hear the exact same words while they listen (elaboration). I also drew their attention to one very common question technique that is mostly found in listening exam, which is distractors. Distractors are often used to mislead the students, e.g., the speaker says one thing at first, then reverse the answer to mean something else. Additionally, the speaker may say all the options in one question with only slight difference, so students need to focus on detailed information (selective/directed attention). Note-taking is one of the most important strategies during exams (especially with long passages). I explained to students that listening questions is mostly written to be answered in order; however, once the recording is played, there is to way to go back and forth. So, in order not to miss any piece of important information, students should learn how to take notes while listening. I shared with them some of the note-taking tips I use myself when I listen, these are:   * Do not write down everything you hear. * Listen and write key words and the information around key words, if required. * Do not write full sentences (phrases or even words are just enough). * Use abbreviations. For example, the word international can be abbreviated to intr. * Pay attention to numbers and names. * Listen to the intonation and pauses. * Do not translate every word in your mind (mental translation). It is okay not to know the meaning of some words. You can use compensatory strategies (e.g., inferencing and understanding the gist) * Verify your notes and answers during the second listening (verification stage) * If you get stuck with one question, move on to the next one quickly and don’t get stressed (self-management)   Next, I explained to students that good listeners use meaning and grammar to help when it is difficult to understand someone. Examples and exercises were covered on pages (118-119).  The next micro skill was recognizing sequencers when listening to spoken English (p. 120). These are: firstly, secondly, next, then, after that and finally. I explained their roles in introducing the next step in a process or story. Listening to sequencers can help in understanding the steps.  The next lesson was about understanding the main point. Understanding the gist is crucial to understand the overall ideas of a passage as a whole. It should be made clear to students that the main goal of listening is to understand the main idea and not worry too much about the details. I explained to students to listen to: (a) key and repeated words, (b) reasons and examples, (c) changes of topic. Then, I shared examples of questions about the gist of a passage (e.g., ‘What is the subject of a passage?’, ‘What is the topic of the passage?’, ‘What is the main idea of the passage?’, What is the purpose of the passage?’). Moreover, I explained to students that the information to help you understand the gist may be directly stated at the beginning of the passage. However, it may also be necessary to draw a conclusion about the gist based upon information provided throughout the passage. Some tips for understanding the gist: (a) listen carefully for the beginning of passage to develop an initial idea, (b) then, as you listen to the rest of the passage, adjust your idea of the gist as you consider what the speakers are saying.  The last micro skill in Unit 10 is recognizing numbers and statistics. I taught them how to listen for key words related to numbers and statistics (e.g., per cent, kilometres, pounds, tonnes, 2018, etc). Then, I asked them to do the listening exercise on page (135) by reading the sentences first and deciding what kind of statistic is missing from each one (e.g., a distance, a weight, an amount of money, a percentage, a year or a quantity). I noticed that the students were better at handling the numbers this time, compared to their performance before, maybe because listening to numbers was already covered in Week 5 (A2 book – Unit 9). I also noticed that they were faster when answering the exercises on page 135 and did not ask me to repeat the recording more than twice. |
| **Week#12**  **(14/11 – 18/11)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – B1**  **Units: 11** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **- Understanding a radio programme about ideas**  **- Recognizing frequent expressions**  **- Reflect & set goals for the next listening** | Before the beginning of this lesson, I explained to students the aim behind this activity: task analysis and goal setting. Task analysis is especially important to me to show me how a listening task is accomplished. By implementing task analysis, I was able to observe students in action to get insights on how they perform in detail. I designed the next listening activity based on J. Willis (1998), which is a framework for running task-based lessons.  The lesson was understanding a radio programme about ideas which could improve the world. First, I introduced students to the new listening topic by activating their schemata/contextualization. I asked them to come up with their own ideas to improve the world and make it a better place to live in. Then I guided students through the pre-listening strategies: Planning/Predicting/Advance Organization.  We completed the tasks on page 143 following the listening process (3 stages-listening). Then, I modified the listening into a task-based listening, by:   1. Exploring the topic with the class (contextualization/ activating schemata) 2. Dictating key words and chunks related to the topic (planning/advance organization) 3. Work in pairs to prepare a report (students can be creative and create a poster or draw visuals if they want to be accompanied with the report). Those who were online, were put in breakout rooms to complete the task. I also allowed them to use the internet to help them generate more ideas 4. Monitoring from a distance and answering students’ questions 5. Students had to prepare to report to the whole class about how they did the task and what they have discovered 6. I made sure to give feedback and praise their work 7. Students were asked to exchange reports with each other. For those who were online, they had to type in the chatting box or share digitally with the whole class online.   One of the difficulties I faced while implementing task analysis was related to the nature of hybrid learning and the gap between online and in-class students. There were communication issues between the two groups (A and B). For example, although I asked those who were in class to log in to their Cisco Webex accounts to look at their online peers’ work, some students were unable to do that due to connectivity problems or because they did not want to as it was confusing for them to participate in two places simultaneously. I thought about this issue in advance and shared my Cisco Webex on a Projector in the class to present the online students’ reports. I also took photos from the reports in class and shared them on my Webex. However, as a suggestion for the future, I think it will be easier if I could upload all students’ works to a digital format, where everyone can see each other’s final products and comment on them.  Last listening lesson was about recognizing frequent expressions. I explained to students that recognizing frequent expressions will help them understand other speakers more easily; using these expressions can also develop their fluency. Frequent expressions are usually said as a single unit, and some sounds change or disappear at the end and start of words (e.g., ‘I don’t know’ sounds like ‘I dunno’, ‘I want to’ sounds like ‘I wanna’, ‘have got to’ sounds like ‘gotta’, ‘should have’ sounds like ‘shoulda’). |
| **Week#13**  **(21/11 – 25/11)**  **Lecture Time:**  **8:00 to 10:00 a.m.**  **Book: Milestones in English – B1**  **Units: 12** | **- Understand listening & self-regulated strategies**  **- Understand a podcast about the global workplace**  **- Reflect & self-evaluate**  **- Track listening strategic plan** | The lesson started with a comprehensive group activity to aid open discussion around different learning and revision listening strategies. I guided the students to review and recap the key learning points in listening throughout the weeks (e.g., the role of self-regulated strategies, listening strategies, setting-goals, self-efficacy and metacognition in L2 listening). Also, I revised important listening skills. Such as understanding the gist, details, the function, the speaker’s stance, the organization and relationships of the listening passage. Students were encouraged to discuss their strategy use and the difficulties they may have encountered. They were also encouraged to share their listening strategies during the Mid-term exam and how they benefited from deploying listening strategies. My role was to lead and monitor this discussion and give students more insights into how to effectively use listening strategies as well as how to activate metacognitive awareness.  The next listening activity was ‘Understand a podcast about the global workplace’. First, I set the context for the listening topic by asking students to look at the two pictures of workplaces and tell the difference (discuss answers with a partner) (page 155). Then, I asked them to make predictions in relation to workplace (e.g., what skills are needed in a workplace, what are the challenges and advantages of a global workplace? etc). I scaffolded their discussion and provided feedback when needed (this was hard to do to the online students). Students listened to the podcast (following the listening process) and completed the exercises on page 155. After listening, students checked their predictions and took notes while listening to help them with answering the listening comprehension questions. Finally, students shared their answers with partners and had a small discussion before sharing their answers with the whole group.  **Reflection and Self-Evaluate**  Students were asked to self-evaluate their listening development and to reflect on their strategy use and goal-setting by filling out the Listening Self-Evaluation sheet (see Appendix M) |

Always encourage students to make listening part of their daily lives. Explain to students that two hours of listening instruction per week inside the classroom is not enough to improve their listening skills. To motivate students to listen more, ask them to listen to more fun content online or watch movies and TV shows of their preference to improve their listening. Moving onto more academic materials in the English classes can be demotivating especially to low skilled listeners. Besides, due to time constraints, teachers cannot always play external listening resources, which are easier and more appealing for students.